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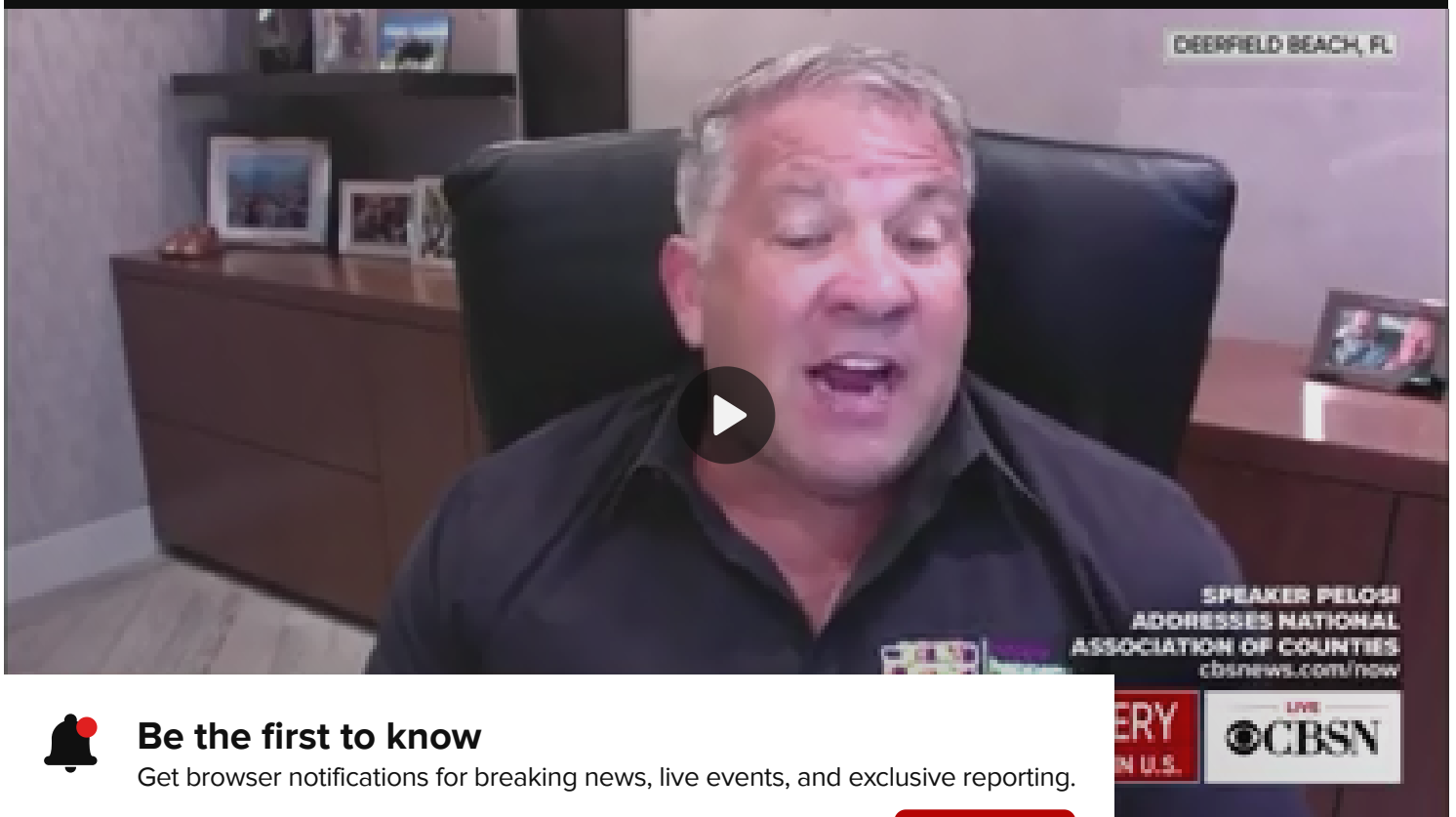
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Affordable daycare called critical to U.S. economic recovery

BY KHRISTOPHER J. BROOKS
JULY 12, 2021 / 2:56 PM / MONEYWATCH



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In addition to good paying jobs, affordable child care options play a critical role in helping U.S. workers recover from the coronavirus pandemic, according to early education experts.

Sending children to low-cost child care centers will enable parents – particularly women – to return to the office, according to Richard Weissman, CEO of the Learning Experience, a Florida-based child care chain. Nearly 3 million American women left the labor force during the pandemic, and have yet to reclaim their responsibilities.

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"Women need to get back into the workforce," Weissman told CBSN. "The opportunity for a two-income, mother-and-father [household] should be right in front of us."

It's critical for youngsters to return to daycare where much of their social, emotional and educational development takes place, according to Weissman.

President Joe Biden is also cognizant of how critical child care is to full economic recovery in the U.S.

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debated in
Congress, would invest \$225 billion to improve child care and curb its cost.

"The most hard-pressed working families won't have to spend a dime if, in fact, my plan works," Biden said during a press conference in May. "If you're low-income folks, you'll be able to get child care for free."

The proposal addresses the void left after thousands of independent daycare centers were forced to close during the pandemic. More than 20,000 daycare centers closed for good in 2020, according to a survey from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Weissman said most of those centers were family-owned and financially "a lot of mom-and-pops just weren't prepared to have the staying power."

Those remaining are unaffordable for many Americans.

A May survey from Bankrate found that parents spend more than \$750 a month on child care per child during the school year and \$834 a month per child in the summer. About 85% of U.S. parents spend 10% of their household income on



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First published on July 12, 2021 / 2:56 PM

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Khristopher J. Brooks

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